

Safer pathways to support for refugee and immigrant women experiencing family violence



A woman presents to a service:

Are indicators of family violence present?
(See over page)

Recognise

Ask questions to detect family violence.

Begin with the explanation, "I am a little concerned about you because of [list the family violence indicators that are present] and would just like to ask you some questions about how things are at home. Is that okay with you?"

No abuse disclosed

Concerns for the woman / children remain.

Woman discloses family violence

Listen, Inquire, Validate, Enhance Safety, Support (LIVES)

- Safety first: ask "Are you safe to go home?"
- If she feels unsafe, support her to call Grampians Community Health 5358 7400
- Report child protection concerns to Child FIRST, 1800 195 114
- Use a phone interpreter (TIS or VITS), if necessary (see over page).
- Make an initial risk assessment to ensure safety of the woman and her children/unborn child, AND consider child protection concerns. Visit 1800RESPECT or inTouch websites for tools to do this.
- Advise her that anything she tells you will be kept confidential, unless you feel that a child is at risk or that she is in immediate danger.
- Demonstrate that you value the woman's knowledge and life experiences.

Respond

Respect her answer

Consider mandated reporting.

Reassure her that she is safe to confide in you, and that she has options should she ever find herself in a family violence situation.

Provide her with information about the types of family violence and her options for support, if she consents.

Your time was well spent if she knows she can return to you for further help.

Referral during business hours

- With her consent, refer to a specialist family violence or sexual assault service (Grampians Community Health 5358 7400, Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre 5381 1211) or the Safe Steps helpline, 1800 015 188
- Additional specific support and local numbers (see Service Directory)

Referral after hours

Safe Steps 1800 015 188

(A local service response from Grampians Community Health will be activated if deemed necessary)

State wide sexual assault crisis line 1800 806 29

Refer

Special considerations when working with refugee and immigrant women

Specific personal barriers to accessing support

- failure to recognise family or sexual violence
- physical and emotional isolation; lack of support network
- cultural barriers, such as spiritual beliefs, rituals, traditions
- fears about breaches of confidentiality
- a sense of powerlessness
- residency status concerns
- access to housing, income support.

Indicators of family violence

A woman who is a victim survivor of family violence might:

- appear anxious or depressed, have lost her confidence, avoid eye contact or have low self-esteem
- seem uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of their partner
- be accompanied by their partner, who does most of the talking
- be on a financial allowance
- have sleeping and/or eating disorders
- have physical signs of violence
- have delayed seeking medical attention or frequently cancels appointments
- have been asked to, or have already taken on, the debt of her partner.

For a full list of potential physical and psychological indicators, please refer to **The Lookout** online.

Using interpreters

Concerns in relation to confidentiality need to be addressed as a priority:

- ask if she prefers a particular interpreter or, similarly, prefers to avoid particular interpreters
- only use professional interpreters; never use family members or community leaders
- request for a professional phone interpreter from another state (and of the preferred gender) to ensure confidentiality of the client
- brief the interpreter first about the presence of family violence. Ask the interpreter to explain their confidentiality obligations to the woman.

You can make a referral to

- A specialist family violence service (**Grampians Community Health 5358 7400**) or a sexual assault service (**SAFV Centre 5381 1211**), or the **Safe Steps** helpline: **1800 015 188 (general) OR 1300 739 282 (hospital staff and police only; press option 1)**
- A social worker
- Refugee Health Nurse
- A legal service
- Victims Assistance and Counselling Program
- Counselling services
- Other psychosocial services (housing and homelessness, legal services, financial support and advice, multicultural support services etc).

See the accompanying **Wimmera Service Directory for more details about these services.